DRAFT DECISION NOTICE
LAKES BASIN PROJECT
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
BECKWOURTH RANGER DISTRICT
PLUMAS AND SIERRA COUNTIES, CALIFORNIA

BACKGROUND

The Lakes Basin Recreation Area (LBRA) was established in 1926 by the Secretary of Agriculture, due to the popularity of recreating in the Lakes Basin area (15,376 acres). There are a wide spectrum of recreation opportunities available to Forest visitors within the project area including a combination of developed and semi-primitive camping, resorts with historic lodges, equestrian stables, hiking, mountain bike, and motorized trails.

The absence of a natural fire regime and past management practices within the Lakes Basin Project area have changed both vertical and horizontal structure, age class distribution, and species composition (species composition shift from shade-intolerant to more shade-tolerant species, Cluck 2012) relative to historical forest structure. Shade-tolerant tree species dominate the understory and share the overstory within mixed conifer stands. These understory trees act as ladder fuels by potentially allowing a surface fire to transition to the forest canopy. Increased tree density also means there is more competition for limited resources (water, sunlight, growing space and nutrients). Conifers with limited resources and a high degree of competition often have decreased vigor and growth, especially during drought conditions, and may become more susceptible to insect attack. Many stands within the project area have experienced and may continue to undergo varying levels of mortality associated with high stand densities, drought, insects and diseases.

Successive dry years can exacerbate unhealthy stand conditions. This typically results in higher levels of bark beetle caused mortality. Trees that succumb to bark beetle attacks are typically predisposed by other factors that compromise their health and vigor. In the Lakes Basin Project area, high stand density, prolonged drought, dwarf mistletoe and Heterobasidion root disease are all contributing factors (Cluck 2012).

Poor stand health can lead to an increase in dead and dying trees which would contribute to higher hazardous fuel loads. As standing dead trees fall they increase the surface fuel loads which influences surface fire behavior properties (rate of spread, reaction intensity and surface flame length). Standing dead trees not only add to surface fuel loads as they decay and fall, they also pose a hazard to the public within recreation sites (campgrounds, trailheads and lodges) and along travel corridors.

Higher density stands increase competition for resources (especially water and light) and reduce tree vigor, which makes individual trees less able to withstand insect attack. In the current absence of frequent understory fire, bark beetles have become one of the principal agents of tree mortality in California. Under historic reference conditions, frequent fire would have interacted

with insects and diseases, as well as abiotic and biotic site conditions, to drive stand structure. Much more open and heterogeneous forest structure resulted, and-based on the strongly inverse stand density versus bark beetle relationship-it can be inferred that bark beetle-caused mortality was probably lower then under current conditions (Safford and Stevens 2017).

From fall 2011 through fall 2015, California experienced four years of the driest conditions in recorded history (PPIC 2018). These drought conditions combined with the increased infestation of native bark beetles have contributed to unprecedented tree mortality – over 129 million trees have died during the past 10 years on federal, state, and private lands across California. Furthermore, the extended drought has weakened trees and left millions of acres of forestland highly susceptible to insect attacks. The drought stress is exacerbated in forests with too many trees competing for limited resources, especially water. Tree losses due to drought stress and bark beetle attacks are expected to increase until precipitation pattern levels return to normal or above normal for one to multiple years (http://frap.fire.ca.gov/projects/projects_drought). Between 2012 and 2017, the drought classification for the Lakes Basin Project Area ranged from "Abnormally Dry" to "Moderate", "Severe", and "Extreme" and "Exceptional" drought stages (USDA 2017).

On October 30, 2015 Governor Brown issued an emergency proclamation and established the California Tree Mortality Task Force (TMTF). And on September 1, 2017 Governor Brown issued Executive Order B-42-17 to bolster the state's response to the unprecedented die-off. One goal of the task force was to identify and map areas of tree mortality caused by five years of drought that pose the greatest potential of harm to people, property, and natural resources. These areas, known as High Hazard Zones (HHZs), are the areas prioritized for tree removal. These HHZs are represented in two tiers, representing both potential direct threat to people, buildings and infrastructure from falling trees (Tier 1), as well as broader fire risk and forest health considerations (Tier 2) (Figure 19 in the Final EA, FRAP 2018). The location of the Tier 1 and Tier 2 HHZ relative to the Lakes Basin Project Area is shown in Figure 20 in the Final EA.

The Lakes Basin project area encompasses several watersheds designated as Tier 2 HHZs. Additionally, approximately 763 acres within the project area has been designated as Tier 1 HHZs (Figure 20 in the Final EA). Tier 1 HHZs are generally correlated with areas that have experienced three or more years of mortality as shown in Figure 20 of the Final EA. Figure 21 in the Final EA displays the number of years with aerially detected mortality within the Lakes Basin project area and is based on United States Forest Service (USFS) Region 5 annual Aerial Detection Surveys (ADS) for the years 2000 through 2017. During this period, a large majority of the project area had mapped mortality areas above background mortality levels. Figure 21 of the Final EA therefore shows the cumulative effect of ongoing tree mortality in the project area. Aerial detection surveys collect data on current year tree mortality and damage. Data includes damage type, number of trees affected, and affected tree species. The primary agent of tree mortality is the fir engraver (*Scolytus ventralis*) with lesser amounts of mountain pine beetle (*Dendroctonus ponderosae*) and Jeffrey pine beetle (*Dendroctonus jeffreyi*) caused mortality. The Lakes Basin project area, since 2002, has experienced years where higher than normal populations of forest pests have caused elevated tree mortality (Figure 22 in the Final EA). In the Lakes Basin Area in 2016, "attacked trees were generally the largest individuals (Jeffrey Pine) that were competing with white fir" (California Forest Pest Council 2016). These large Jeffrey Pines in the LBRA have high ecosystem value and high scenic value. In 2017, aerial detection

surveys indicated approximately 7,427 trees killed due to bark beetles across more than 1,700 acres (14 percent) of the project area.

Currently, high stand densities are prevalent within the project area, as described under "Existing Conditions" of the Lakes Basin Vegetation Report. On average, within mixed conifer stands, there are approximately 586 TPA, 236 square feet per acre of basal area, and an average relative density of 66 percent. These overly dense forest stands are an important cause of tree susceptibility to insects and pathogens. Intense tree-to-tree competition in overly dense stands tends to slow growth and decrease resistance of trees. Spread of insects, disease, and fire is also enhanced in dense stands. Overly dense stands are a major cause of tree mortality in the Sierra Nevada forests during both drought and non-drought periods (Ferrell 1996). In dense stands, changing climatic conditions could significantly alter the amount and distribution of bark beetle-caused mortality in the Sierra Nevada (North 2012). Also, Battles and others evaluated the impacts of climate change on the mixed conifer region in California and provided insight regarding forest health concerns and management implications for forest managers (Battles et al. 2008). This study found that changes in climate could "exacerbate forest health concerns" by increasing the susceptibility of weakened trees to mortality as a result of fire, disease epidemics and insect outbreaks and potentially enabling forest insects to expand ranges or increase potential for widespread damage (Battles et al. 2008). With high stand densities in the project area and climatic uncertainty there is potential for insect populations to remain above normal levels, spread, and cause significant loss of recreation values and negatively affect adjacent resources.

PROJECT LOCATION

The project area is located less than one mile southwest of the town of Graeagle, California, on the Beckwourth Ranger District of the Plumas National Forest, Plumas and Sierra Counties, California. The project area includes approximately 12,674 acres of National Forest System lands within and adjacent to the Lakes Basin Recreation Area (LBRA). A significant portion of the project is within the Lakes Basin Management Area, with smaller portions of the project within the Mohawk and Haskell Management Areas (USDA 1988a). The project would encompass all or portions of T22N, R11E, Sec. 36, T22N, R12E, Sec. 21-22, 27-29, 31-34, T21N, R11E, Sec. 1, 12-13, 24, T21N, R12E, Sec. 3-6, 7-10, 15-18, 19-22, 30, Mount Diablo Base Meridian (MDBM). Figure 1 in the Final EA shows the location of the project area.

DECISION

Based upon my review of the Lakes Basin Environmental Assessment (EA), I have decided to implement Alternative 1 with updates. This alternative includes the following activities: mechanical thinning, grapple piling, hand thinning, hand-piling, planting of trees, and underburning on 5,463 acres in the Lakes Basin Project. Alternative 1 updated is fully described in the EA, with maps and descriptive tables in Appendices A and B.

After conducting additional ground surveys to assess the layout of the project and reviewing comments received, 405 acres of mechanical thin units were modified to either hand thin or grapple pile treatments. The new total acres for each treatment proposed under this update to Alternative 1 is displayed in Table 72 in Appendix A of the Final EA and the location of the

treatments is shown in Figure 16 in Appendix B of the Final EA. Because the changes all involved a change to treatments with fewer impacts, no additional analysis was required.

DECISION RATIONALE

Alternative 1, as updated, best achieves the goals of the project: promoting healthy, diverse, forests that are resilient to insects, diseases, and fire; maintaining and promoting aspen stands and meadows; removing hazard trees; enhancing visual experiences; and improving water quality.

I considered a number of different criteria when deciding which alternative to select. No single factor or concern entirely prevailed in determining my choice of alternative selection. The criteria I focused on were: minimizing the threat and spread of insect infestations, protecting and enhancing the recreation values and visual quality objectives in the Lakes Basin Recreation Area, and responding to public comments.

Alternative 1 would best achieve the purpose and need of promoting healthy and resilient forests and reducing the threat of insect infestations and spread of wildfire. A comparison of the effects of each alternative is shown in Table 10 in the Final EA. In comparing the alternatives, Alternative 1 was shown to maximize the improvement of forest health and resiliency, as measured by stand conditions including: trees per acre, basal area, and stand densities. Furthermore, Alternative 1 would reduce the threat of wildfire considerably more than Alternative 2, as described by the predicted mortality, crowning index, and canopy base height.

Upon further consideration of the constraints required due to the Plumas LRMP (USDA 1988) and the optional mitigations for the Lakes Basin Recreation Area (LBRA), we reconsidered which treatment units would be proposed for mechanical thinning and updated Alternative 1. Specifically, within LBRA, no new landings would be constructed, the majority of mechanical thin units were modified to hand-thin only, and no new temporary roads would be constructed within the Semi-Primitive Area prescription. These mitigations are described in the letter of approval from the Forest Supervisor (USDA 2016). Consideration of these mitigations and logistical constraints led to the modification of 405 acres of mechanical thin units to hand thin or grapple pile as described in Alternative 1, updated in Appendices A and B.

Also, several commenters requested that the Forest Service consider an alternative using no mechanical treatment. We modeled the effects of a hand thin only in Alternative 4 and determined that the purpose and need would not be achieved because hand thinning would not decrease stand densities below the lower threshold of density-related mortality. Therefore, hand thinning would not sufficiently reduce the susceptibility of the forest to insects or wildfire. The modification of 405 acres for the update to Alternative 1 does take into consideration this request from the public to reduce the acres proposed for mechanical treatment.

In regards to protecting and enhancing recreation values and visual quality objectives, this project will incorporate project-specific design features as described in Table 6 of the Final EA and in the Recreation section of the Final EA (Final EA, pages 131-132), as well as all Standard Management Requirements described in Appendix D of the Final EA. The mitigations related to visual quality objectives (VQO) and the recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) consider the timing and location of treatments. Treatments included in Alternative 1, as updated, are designed

to have a long-term benefit to recreation and visual resources and any short-term adverse effects would be minimized.

In considering the proposed road treatments, the Forest Service consulted with a mining claimant who was concerned about the potential loss of access to his claim. Obliteration of one segment of a non-system road would therefore be delayed until after project implementation (shown as non-system road 12 in Figure 17 of the Final EA).

The Lakes Basin Final EA documents the environmental analysis and conclusions upon which this decision is based and is incorporated by reference.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Plumas National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions as the "Lakes Basin Project" in December of 2012, and has been on each subsequent Schedule of Proposed Actions. The Beckwourth Ranger District held two open house meetings prior to the development of the Proposed Action. Open house meetings were held on June 24, 2015 and June 27, 2015 at the Beckwourth District Office and Graeagle Fire Hall with over 50 individuals attending each meeting. In addition, a public field trip was held on October 29, 2015 which presented the project to members of the public, local stake holders and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs include Feather River Stewardship Coalition, Plumas County Fire Safe Council, and Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship. As a result of the comments received during scoping and public meetings held in 2015, the recreation and trail components of the original proposal were separated out of this project. The District started the NEPA scoping process with publication in the Feather River Bulletin and Portola Reporter on December 16, 2015. The purpose of the scoping process was to inform the public about the Purpose and Need and Proposed Action to seek different points of view and to evaluate issues to be addressed during the analysis. The packet was mailed to Native American entities (including federally recognized tribal governments, and Native American organizations/non-profit groups), that are interested in projects located on this portion of the Plumas National Forest. Over 350 Proposed Action description packets (Proposed Action, figures and maps) were sent to various individuals, organizations and government agencies via mail and electronic mail.

Scoping comments were received from 11 individuals or organizations (Table 1).

Table 1. Individuals and organizations that provided scoping comments on the Proposed Action

Organization(s)	Representative(s)	Date Received
American Forest Resource Council (AFRC) and Sustainable Forest Action Coalition (SFAC),	Bill Wickman	January 13, 2016
Gold Lake Beach Resort	Jim Reid	January 11, 2016
John Muir Project (JMP) and Center for Biological Diversity (CBD)	Chad Hanson and Justin Augustine	December 18, 2015
Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA)	Justin Kooyman	January 13, 2016
Quincy Library Group (QLG)	Bill Wickman and Mike Yost	January 13, 2016

Sierra Forest Legacy (SFL)	Ben Solvesky	December 16, 2015
	Dick Artley	December 30, 2015
	Cary Lynch	December 22, 2015
Plumas Forest Project	John Preschutti	December 31, 2015
Plumas Forest Project	John Preschutti (addendum)	January 6, 2016
Plumas Forest Project	John Preschutti (via CARA)	January 14, 2016
	Mark Mihevc	January 14, 2016
	Todd Vogel	December 16, 2015

Based on the scoping comments received, the interdisciplinary team identified issues and considered an additional alternative. Alternatives are described in Chapter 2 of the Final EA and Issues considered are described in Appendix E of the Final EA.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) and draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was released for public comment with publication in the *Feather River Bulletin* and *Portola Reporter* on February 28, 2018. Letters were mailed to those who commented during scoping or expressed interest in this project. Comments were received from 7 (seven) individuals or organizations (Table 2).

Table 2. Individuals and organizations that provided comments on the Lakes Basin Environmental Assessment

Organization(s)	Representative(s)	Date Received
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board	Daniel Whitley	March 7, 2018
	Dick Artley	March 8, 2018
Sierra Access Coalition	Corky Lazzarino	March 21, 2018
Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA)	Justin Kooyman	March 29, 2018
	Mark Mihevc	March 30, 2018
Plumas Forest Project	John Preschutti	March 30, 2018
John Muir Project (JMP) and Center for Biological Diversity (CBD)	Christy Sherr and Justin Augustine	March 30, 2018

The interdisciplinary team responded to all comments received. Changes were made to proposed treatments and mitigations based on comments received. Specifically, 405 acres that were originally proposed as mechanical thin treatments were changed to hand thin treatments, as described above under Decision Rationale. Mitigations related to visual quality objectives were clarified in Table 6 of the Final EA and mitigations related to the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum were stated on pages 131-132 of the Final EA. Responses to all comments are included in the project record and are available upon request.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of October 21, 1976, the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970, and the National Forest Management Act of 1976, combined give the Forest Service the authority and responsibility for protection of resources and management of National

Forest System lands. The National Forest Management Act requires that projects and activities be consistent with the governing Forest Plan (16 USC 1604(i)). The Plumas National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (USDA 1988) as amended, establishes management direction for the Plumas National Forest. This management direction is achieved through the establishment of Forest Plan goals and objectives, standards and guidelines, and Management Area (MA) goals and accompanying standards and guidelines. This project is consistent with all applicable Forest Plan forest-wide standards and guidelines. Project activities would occur within Forest Plan management areas 34 (Mohawk), 35 (Lakes Basin), and 39 (Haskell). Harvest of timber within the MA 35 would be included to remove safety hazards, to improve recreation, and to enhance visual experiences, as allowable under the Forest Plan (USDA 1988, page 4-324). This project includes timber harvest within a semi-primitive area that requires the approval of the Forest Supervisor; this approval was indicated in a letter dated August 3, 2016 (USDA 2016).

This action is in accordance with NEPA Implementation Regulations, 40 CFR 1501.2 and with the goals, objectives, and management direction of the Plumas National Forest 1988 Land and Resource Management Plan as amended by the 2004 Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Record of Decision (USDA 2004). The resource reports in the project file provide further discussion regarding consistency with applicable standards and laws.

Clean Water Act of 1948 (as amended in 1972 and 1987)

The Clean Water Act establishes as federal policy the control of both point and non-point source pollution and assigns to the states the primary responsibility for control of water pollution. In response to this law, the Forest Service has developed best management practices (BMPs) in coordination with the State of California Water Quality Resources Control Board, with BMPs certified by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

Non-point source pollution on Plumas National Forest is primarily managed through the water quality management program contained in *Water Quality Management for Forest System Lands in California* (USDA 2000). The Best Management Practices (BMPs) contained in that document have been replaced by the National Forest Service BMP manual, *National Best Management Practices for Water Quality Management on National Forest System Lands* (USDA 2012b). The 2000 California water quality management manual contains the 1981 Management Agency Agreement (MAA) between the California State Water Resources Control Board and the USDA, Forest Service. The State Board has designated the Forest Service as the management agency for all activities on National Forest lands and the MAA constitutes the basis of regional waivers for non-point source pollution. Best Management Practices related to the Lakes Basin project are further discussed in Appendix A of the Soils and Hydrology Report.

Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act

This section of the Clean Water Act requires the identification of water bodies that do not meet, or are not expected to meet, water quality standards or are considered impaired. The list of affected water bodies, and associated pollutants or stressors, is provided by the State Water Resources Control Board and approved by the USEPA. The most current list available is the

2010 303(d) list (CSWRCB 2010). No water bodies on this list are located within the Lakes Basin project area. All perennial streams that exist in project area watersheds flow to the Middle Fork Feather River.

California State Water Quality Standards

This project complies with the Clean Water Act through use of "Best Management Practices" designed to minimize or prevent the discharge of both point and non-point source pollutants from Forest roads, developments and activities. Under the Clean Water Act regulations, the Forest Service is required to obtain permits from the California Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). At this time, the Forest Service is working with the RWQCB to secure the appropriate permit(s) for this project.

In 2017, the California Regional Water Quality Control Board (CRWQCB) - Central Valley Region adopted Resolution No. R5-2017-0061 that provides for a conditional waiver of the requirement to file a report of waste discharge and obtain waste discharge requirements for timber harvest activities on National Forest System lands within the Central Valley Region (CRWQCB 2017). This resolution was a continuation of a timber harvest waiver program that began in 2003. The Lakes Basin project would comply with CRWQCB waiver requirements per Resolution R5-2017-0061.

Clean Air Act

The Clean Air Act provides the principal framework for national, state and local efforts to protect air quality. Under the Clean Air Act, the Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards is responsible for setting standards for pollutants which are considered harmful to people and the environment. The 1990 Clean Air Act is the most recent version of a law first passed in 1970.

All burning that will be done on the Lakes Basin Project will be in accordance with an approved smoke management plan approved by the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District (NSAQMD). The smoke plan requires burning with wind directions that transport smoke away from communities and the amount of acres burned daily are limited. Burns are conducted during approved burn days, when atmospheric conditions favor smoke dispersion. Prescribed burning takes place in spring or fall after the first rains when fuels are relatively moist to reduce the potential for fire escape.

National Historic Preservation Act

Section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the federal government to preserve important historic, cultural and natural aspects of our natural heritage. To accomplish this, federal agencies utilize the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). This process has been codified in 36 CFR 800 Subpart B. The coordination or linkage between the Section 106 process of the NHPA and the mandate to preserve our national heritage under NEPA is well understood and is formally established in 36 CFR 800.3b and 800.8. Locally, the Plumas National Forest uses a programmatic agreement (PA) between Region 5 of

the US Forest Service, the California State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to implement the Section 106 process (USDA 2013).

The Lakes Basin Project meets NHPA by protecting cultural resources through field survey, tribal and historical preservation society consultation and protection of sites in the Lakes Basin Project area. All artifacts and features would be avoided during project implementation as directed by the National Historic Preservation Act, therefore, with the exception of one site, there would be no effect on historic properties. This one property will be adversely effected, however this effect is being minimized/mitigated through measures outlined within a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) executed with the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and will not impede the outcome of the proposed project. Therefore, with the exception of the one site, there would be no affect to historic properties while the adverse effect to the one historic property (log chute system) has been resolved in compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA.

The District Archaeologist will monitor all activities during implementation. All project activities would cease and the District Archaeologist will be informed immediately in the event that new cultural sites or features are discovered during project implementation.

Endangered Species Act

The project will not affect any threatened, endangered or candidate species and thereby complies with the Endangered Species Act of 1973. A Biological Assessment was prepared in accordance with Forest Service Manual (FSM) direction 2672.24 and meets legal requirements set forth under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, and implementing regulations [19 U.S.C. 1536 (c), 50 CFR 402.12 (f) and 402.14 (c)].The USFWS was contacted for a current species list of species occurring within the project area. Formal consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service was completed and a letter of concurrence was received on February 8, 2018 (USDI 2018). The USFWS concurred with the determination that this project would be likely to adversely affect Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frogs (SNYLF) and likely to adversely affect designated critical habitat. The Forest Service was granted incidental take of one individual SNYLF and the capture and relocation of up to five SNYLF for this project. The USFWS determined that this incidental take is not likely to result in jeopardy to the SNYLF and the Lakes Basin project can proceed as planned with the specified mitigations. If more than one frog is killed or injured or if more than five frogs are captured and relocated as a result of project implementation, the Forest Service would need to reinitiate formal consultation with USFWS as required under 50 CFR 402.16. Per the USFWS concurrence letter: adverse effects to SNYLF shall be minimized to the maximum extent feasible; the Forest Service shall include the avoidance, minimizing, and reporting measures precisely as described in the S&Gs and BMPs as stated in Appendices A and B of the Amended Programmatic Biological Opinion (USDI 2018).

Project design features, such as equipment exclusion zones, limited operating periods, and prescribed burning restrictions would minimize potential effects to Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frogs. All applicable Standards and Guidelines (S&Gs), Best Management Practices (BMPs), Project Standard Management Requirements (SMRs) (Appendix D of the Final EA), and design elements (Tables 5a, 5b, and 6 of the Final EA) would be implemented with all land-disturbing activities to reduce the potential for impacts to occur to individual frogs and their habitat.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

In late 2008, a Memorandum of Understanding between the USDA Forest Service and the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service to Promote the Conservation of Migratory Birds was signed. The intent of the MOU is to strengthen migratory bird conservation through enhanced collaboration and cooperation between the Forest Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as well as other federal, state, tribal and local governments. Within the National Forests, conservation of migratory birds focuses on providing a diversity of habitat conditions at multiple spatial scales and ensuring that bird conservation is addressed when planning for land management activities.

Effects to migratory birds were considered in the development and design of the Lakes Basin project and described generally in a Migratory Landbird Conservation Report. Specific effects to Sensitive bird species and species associated with particular habitat types were also described in a Biological Evaluation and the Management Indicator Species report.

The project could result in temporary adverse effects to individual birds, but long term, beneficial, effects are expected to result from project implementation because the more open stands would benefit remaining trees, hardwoods, and other species with more light, water, and space to grow and increase the stand resilience, a real concern after an extended drought, substantial tree mortality from insects, the risk of wildfire, and ongoing climate change.

Management Indicator Species

A management indicator species report was prepared for this project to consider project-related effects to various habitat types and associated species. The report described the following habitats that occur in the project area: riverine and lacustrine, oak-associated hardwoods and hardwood/ conifer, early seral coniferous forest, mid-seral coniferous forest, late seral open canopy coniferous forest, late seral closed canopy coniferous forest, and snags in green forest. The project would affect various components of these habitats but would not result in substantial effects on the distribution or abundance of the habitats or the associated species.

Environmental Justice Executive Order

On February 11, 1994, President Clinton signed Executive Order 12898 requiring each Federal agency to achieve environmental justice as part of its mission by identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations. The transparent, non-exclusive process used to develop this project, as well as consultation with tribes, ensured fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. No environmental justice issues were identified for this project as it is not expected to lead to disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority or low-income populations.

The resource reports in the project record provide further discussion regarding consistency with applicable laws and regulations.

A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Final EA were considered. I determined these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will not be prepared.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES

This proposed project is subject to the objection process pursuant to 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B.

Eligibility to File Objections

Objections will be accepted only from those who have previously submitted specific, written comments regarding the proposed project either during scoping or other designated opportunity for public comment in accordance with § 218.5(a). Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted timely, specific written comments regarding the proposed project unless based on new information arising after designated opportunities.

Individual members of organizations must have submitted their own comments to meet the requirements of eligibility as an individual, objections received on behalf of an organization are considered as those of the organization only. If an objection is submitted on behalf of a number of individuals or organizations, each individual or organization listed must meet the eligibility requirement of having previously submitted comments on the project (§ 218.7). Names and addresses of objectors will become part of the public record.

Contents of an Objection

Incorporation of documents by reference in the objection is permitted only as provided for at § 218.8(b). Minimum content requirements of an objection are identified in § 218.8(d) include:

- Objector's name and address with a telephone number if available; with signature or other verification of authorship supplied upon request;
- Identification of the lead objector when multiple names are listed, along with verification upon request;
- Name of project, name and title of the responsible official, national forest/ranger district of project; and
- Sufficient narrative description of those aspects of the proposed project objected to, specific issues related to the project, how environmental law, regulation, or policy would be violated, and suggested remedies which would resolve the objection.
- Statement demonstrating the connection between prior specific written comments on this project and the content of the objection, unless the objection issue arose after the designated opportunities for comment.

Filing an Objection

Written objections, including any attachments, must be filed (regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, or express delivery) with the Reviewing Officer at: Daniel Lovato, Forest Supervisor, c/o Katherine Carpenter, Plumas National Forest Supervisor's Office, 159 Lawrence Street, Quincy, CA 95971, fax 530-283-7746, within 45 days following the publication date of this legal

notice in the newspaper of record. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered objections are: 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic objections must be submitted in a format such as an email message, portable document format (.pdf), plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), and Word (.doc or .docx) to:

objections-pacificsouthwest-plumas@fs.fed.us

It is the responsibility of Objectors to ensure their objection is received in a timely manner (§ 218.9). Please include **Lakes Basin Project** in the subject line of electronic messages.

The publication date in the *Feather River Bulletin* and *Portola Reporter* newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection of this project. Those wishing to object to this proposed project should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

After the objection period concludes, there will be a 45-day objection resolution period.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Implementation is anticipated in Fall 2018.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Gretchen Jehle, Project Leader, at (530) 836-7157 or gjehle@fs.fed.us.

MATTHEW JEDRA Date

Beckwourth District Ranger

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LITERATURE CITED

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